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ABSTRACT

One of a series prepared by the Hawaii Newspaper Agency, this teaching guide offers suggestions on using the newspaper to teach the mentally handicapped. Classroom activities include the use of graffiti, pictures, comics, color, and charts, as well as speech activities, debate issues, history, creative or make up contests, anthropology, archaeology, science, and math. Values are also taken into consideration. (SW)

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using your daily newspaper to teach

THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

An educational project of the
Hawaii Newspaper Agency, Inc.

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Mrs. Mee Qumi P. Loo is a special education teacher at Waipahu Intermediate School. Trained as an English teacher, she has nevertheless found her present work a challenge and an inspiration.

Mee Qual P. Loo

She understands fully both the limitations of her students and their need for being proud of whatever they can accomplish. She states her primary objective as helping her students function a little better in the world outside the classroom.

She understands that, with these students, she must deal in reality. Abstract ideas are not important to them and never will be. They may never be able to name all the presidents of the United States but they should be able to make change and to buy groceries at the store. So Mrs. Loo sticks to the here-and-now; she helps them read better; she tries to make them proud of whatever they can do so that they want to do more.

The newspaper is one of her most valuable teaching tools. It does indeed deal in reality -- reality in vocabulary, in problems, in what's happening in the world and in the community. It's an adult medium and, as one English teacher said:

> "No big seventh grader who can't read wants to be seen carrying around 'Six Ducks on a Pond' but he's proud to be seen reading the newspaper."

We hope this booklet will help you reach some of your students who -- justifiably -- "hate textbooks."

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In working with the educable mentally retarded child, it is essential that the teacher establish a comfortable, communicative relationship right from the start.

The newspaper is a very good tool for getting students to loosen up, to talk, to voice their opinions, to agree and to disagree. It's amazing to me how much a teacher can learn about his students -- their homelife, and their philosophies -- from just getting their reactions to the various things happening around them.

In the beginning, I found that my students were very reluctant to admit that, in some of their homes, there is no daily paper. We take the paper for granted and berate the paper boy when he is late; but some of our disadvantaged children are openly proud of the chance to take home copies of the newspaper used in class to share with their families.

At the beginning of the year, you need to know so many things about your students.

GRAFFITI IS GREAT

Also, especially, if you are at a new school, you're going to have to discourage handwriting on the wall. Otherwise, your students may soon autograph the buildings with some luscious examples of art and English.

Use an entire blackboard or a long length of butcher paper mounted to the wall as an outlet for their creativity. Draw a fence on the blackboard or the paper. You don't have to be artistic, because artistic I'm not, but I took liberties with the general idea.

Draw a cartoon character poised with pen in hand. Now, let your students go! Let them use crayons, colored chalk, or even water paints to autograph this fence with their names or nicknames. They may even add self-portraits. This is a different way to get students to introduce each other and to remember the new names. It's a good aid for the harrassed teacher on the first day.

To teach children right and left handedness, why not use the same idea? Make palm prints with drawing charcoal, dark crayon, or even stamped on with finger paint. For fun and greater discrimination, have the prints mixed up. Then have the children try to match the palm prints on the fence with their own right and left hands.

Or, do it on the floor, using footprints. Find left and right again. Of course, if you mount this after the practice session, you may have people thinking you have menehunes climbing up your walls.

Let older students write in idiomatic expressions, terms with local color, or just plain confusing teen-talk. Then, in the sharing process, we grown-ups will become a little more hip to what's what in their world and might even cool it sometimes!

Learning is everybody's business. Words, facts, ideas, even pictures supplement basic learnings. All these are readily available in the newspaper. And the nice thing about using the newspaper is that it can be cut, colored, torn, even pasted, and we don't have to get frantic about the mending fee, or the ire of the librarian over missing passages.

MAKE USE OF PICTURES

Students at all ages can read pictures. For the educable mentally retarded, and especially for the trainables, reading ability is limited. But no child wants to feel that his world is so much narrower than that of his peers.

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In the beginning, cut out pictures with very provocative ideas. Leave out or cover the captions. Have the students study the pictures. Then have them tell what they read in the pictures.

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. If this is so, then the MRE's should definitely develop this ability. The abler students might write short captions explaining the illustrations. These can be compared with the actual captions later.

Some may never quite understand adjectives and adverbs, but they'll be using them to express compassion and concern for others, as with a picture of refugee children in a Nigerian camp, or with a picture of a catcher pleading his case with the umpire, or with the golfer who has to stop to wring out his soggy sock.

They may show indignation in discussion of a Dennis the Menace cartoon. Dennis exclaims upon leaving the supermarket, "Did ya see how he searched me? Just like in POLICE STATION!" Their reactions are bound to be interesting.

To add depth to an activity of this kind, have students re-enact the various situations. Watch and see what adjectives and adverbs they use. List these. They'll probably be amazed that they know so many.

On other occasions, select adjectives such as sad, happy, excited, angry, dangerous, neat, sloppy. Have students find fitting illustrations. Use these words as captions and spelling words.

Take a strongly written article like "Poverty--Never and Always" by John R. Gage, Field Services Chief, American Public Welfare Association (Honolulu Star-Bulletin and Advertiser, 7/21/68, p. 8 of This Week Magazine) and see the kinds of response you get

from your youngsters. Their reactions will vary according to their economic status, but they are very sure to react.

In this article, the words never and always are emphatically in bold type. Here is a brief part of it:

> Poverty is never having enough.
>
> Poverty is always running out of money, of food, of clothes, of fuel, of soap, of bedding, of equipment, of furnishings, of room, of time, of any way to go any place, of anything to do anything with, of any way for the family to stay together and live.
>
> Poverty is never having hope of enough.
>
> Poverty is always knowing that there is no way to get ahead, no way to save up in order to later "have"; always knowing that what little you have is wearing out, being used up, going "down-hill"; always knowing that "getting by," eating home, keeping covered, as clean as you can is the best you can ever do.
>
> Poverty is never feeling that you are a part of the rest of the world -- never being informed; never understanding.
>
> Poverty is always being uneducated, untrained, half-equipped. It is always being told you are dumb, ignorant, can't understand.

After reading it, get involved in discussion. Argumentative speech is good exercise for educables. Have them find substitutions for never and always. How did this affect the meaning of the article? Would they like to write their impressions of poverty?

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LET THEM EXPRESS THEMSELVES

Another exercise is to take emotionally-loaded words from the newspaper. Prepare a list. Have students give you their immediate reactions to these words. Later, go over their answers. Find out what makes them feel this way. Surprisingly, lots of prejudices and superstitions may abound.

This may be a springboard for discussion of certain basic issues confronting the state, the nation, and the world. Words like arson, war, draft, police, robber, family, marriage, divorce, child-beating, slugging, court, jail form the basis for lessons in democracy, law and constitutional rights, trial by jury, economic sufficiency.

To get students to explore the paper, put three or four leading words from headlines on the blackboard. Let them find the different articles, read them, and share the information. Ask what they expected when they saw the key words on the board.

COMICS ARE IMPORTANT

I had an English professor who was a mother of five, Girl Scout leader, and a professional book reviewer. She said, "I never allow my children to read comics!"

HI & Lois

I feel we must accept comics as part of the American way of life. I go further and say that some children have to be taught how to read comics and cartoons. In addition, comics are good for learning sequence. Take a strip the children are particularly fond of, such as "Dennis the Menace" or "Peanuts."

Study the frames. Then take them apart, and see if your students can put them together again.

In cartoons, your students may have to learn to read pictures, labels, and make inferences. They must learn to make associations. These are learning aids. They are in a very competitive school world, and no one wants to be retarded, even about comics and cartoons! Political lampoons may be too hard for them.

SO IS COLOR

We're almost certain to have in our enrollment a few students who need to be drawn out. For the child with autistic leanings, for the child who hardly ever utters a word voluntarily, don't forget that color is a means of expression. Color expresses moods, feelings, values.

Ask students to cut out pictures based on a theme or belonging to one classification, e.g., food, or clothing. Color as they please. Some children favor certain colors, or you may see signs of preservation in their coloring. I had one boy who loved violet and turquoise, invariably in a pattern of stripes. It may be fun to find out what feelings children associate with certain colors. For some, red is a happy color. For others, red is a color you use when you're angry. For some, red is a majestic color.

One of my instructors in a course on the mentally retarded child told us about meeting a psychologist who was doing a study on the relationship of color and mood. She found that mustard, not black, seemed to be the favorite color of those with suicidal tendencies.

CHARTS HELP RECALL

Because our students may need work in auditory and visual recall, make charts of words from various sections of the newspaper. Start with a few words; gradually increase the number of words used. Say the words. See how many the students can remember hearing. Next, let them look at the words for a minute or two. Remove the chart. See how many they recall seeing.

For instance, try visual recall of twenty items. Look at the twenty words for two minutes. Now, see how many they remember. All twenty? Good.

From the auditory and visual recall of single words, move on to the recall of two words, short phrases, slogans, or number combinations. Numerical recall may utilize single digits, then multiple digits. Many cannot see combinations.

MAGIC SQUARES

To get students to join the fun of seeing how many words they know, whether they're 2, 3, 4 or 5 letter ones, try the Magic Squares. This is an adaptation of an idea by Sally B. Childs and Ralph de S. Childs.

Teachers and students can make their own squares by utilizing the large-sized lower case letters in headlines or ads. Cut out some of these, including consonant blends and diagraphs. Cut small cardboard or oaktag squares. Mark off nine sections. Paste one letter (or the blends and diagraphs for the abler students) in each section. Make as many combinations as desired. Try these rules:

1. Start in any square and move on from one square to another to make a word.

2. Do <u>not</u> jump over any square.

3. In any one word, do <u>not</u> go back to a square after leaving it.

4. Pause in a square to double a letter.

5. Add endings like <u>s</u>, <u>ed</u>, <u>ing</u>, <u>er</u>, <u>ly</u> to make more words.

6. Names are permitted.

7. Only real words score.

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Scoring: 1 point for each word.

Bonus Points: 1 extra point for each 4-letter word
2 extra points for each 5-letter word
3 extra points for each 6-letter word

This activity encourages the use of the dictionary, and develops pride in spelling.

HEADLINES ARE FUN

Besides teaching the eye-catching value of headlines, we can go further. Take this headline. Saigon on Alert For Big Attack.

1. Discuss its historical and military implications.

2. Locate Saigon on a wall map. Mark its location with a colored pin or a tiny banner.

3. Now for some language activities. Take Saigon. Say it. Spell it. Look at it. Write it. Use it in a sentence. Then in ten minutes see how many words each student -- or the class as a whole -- can write using each letter of Saigon as an initial letter. Move on to the word alert. Use the dictionary to find its different meanings. Have students pantomime various situations. List all the synonyms and antonyms possible with the word big. How do you form the degrees of comparison?

Study the word attack. Is this an action or a name word? How is it used in this headline?

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Playacting is a pleasant change for a dull day. Select number of headlines. Here are some representative ones:

Going and Coming
Hijacker Takes Plane to Cuba
Police Have 489 Guns to Dump
2 on Palmyra Isle 20 Days Rescued
Domi Gives Rudy Boxing Lesson
"Cool It" If You Can
Joggers Converge on Aiea High
Iraq's President Tarown Out
Hop!

Let each student choose a headline to pantomime. For some of these, partners may have to be chosen. Allow time for a buzz session. Even a headline like "Going and Coming" requires some planning. Let the audience guess the title.

SPEECH ACTIVITIES

Speech activities? There are a number of speech activities possible. In addition to giving oral reports on news or feature items, you may want to try one or more of these activities.

If a student heard a hot news flash on TV or radio, ask him if he can find it in the newspaper and read it for the class with as much feeling and dramatic effect as the news commentator.

Choose a short, interesting picture or article. For instance, I've selected one of a pig farmer scooping up a fork full of water lilies from a pond near his farm for his pigs, and loading this onto his truck. It seems that his pigs thrive on a lily diet. Have one person relate this in formal English, another in informal English, and a third in pidgin English. Or, using this same story, select five pairs of students.

Have one person in the first pair tell an immigrant (the second student) this story. The second pair can demonstrate how to communicate with an uneducated person. The third pair can feature a parent-child situation. The fourth, a student-principal sharing. The fifth pair could just be two very good classmates talking together on the playground.

Take a terse headline: "Kauai bathers told: Cap it--or cut it". This is an article about the old rule that girls with long hair had to wear swimming caps at the swimming pools, to prevent getting hair into the pumps and clogging up the water purification and circulation system. This new rule now applies to all persons, boys included.

> "The boys with long hair don't like it when told they have to wear caps." Ferreiro said. "We have no power to say they cannot have long hair. But if they don't want to wear caps, they have to cut their hair."

The ruling requires caps for all with hair more than four inches long.

In school where the haircut situation is a ticklish one, let the students argue the pros and cons of a real situation like this. Then go further and discuss updating, establishing, or abolishing certain rules and laws.

DEBATE THE ISSUES

Let students pretend they are legislators and Constitutional Convention members. Hold debates on issues the students show interest in or concern about. They need the practice in persuasive and argumentative speech.

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This was tried with some very slow students and the effects were hilarious. The class was divided into four groups. Each group was to present a program called "The Reading Hour". Selections were left to the group, each person read his own piece, and sat down. One group decided on one reader, and dramatization by the others. One group turned its selection into a dialogue and presented its program with scenery and lots of dramatic effect. One group decided to put on an evening TV news broadcast. They presented this with terrific sound effects, and only a dim light. In the semi-darkness even the meek become brave.

In producing a news broadcast, it becomes a challenge for the group to watch the second hand, throw in a few commercials, and select a catchy identifying theme and name for the station.

MAKE UP SOME CONTESTS

Several contests may be developed from the newspaper.

Have everyone use the same page. Allow first about ten minutes; later try five minutes. See who can circle the most nouns. If two students can work on the same page, it becomes more competitive.

Why not have your own quiz program? Prepare ahead of time a list of people prominent in the news. Use only their initials. Have contestants guess who these very important people are. Try these: LBJ, JFK, RFK, HHH, Mayor NSB, Governors JAB, NAR, RR, Republician TMM, Honolulu's Senator HLF, former President DDE.

Or take initials in common use and have contestants guess what they stand for. c.g., USA, USN, USMC, USAF, C & C, VP, NATO, UN, UNESCO.

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Try symbols used in the newspaper. These may include ¢, $, ¥, ©, #, &, the copyright sign, the use of the elephant and the donkey.

GUESS WHERE I'M GOING

Guess Where I'm Going! This is both fun and quick geography review. Take the travel news or the airline and cruise ads. Find names of frequently-mentioned cities or capitals on much-travelled routes. Have contestants supply the state or country. Five points for correct answers. Supply small prizes.

Say .....

I'm going to Chicago....
(student gives the state)

I'm going to Rome....(student names the country)

I'm just back from Las Vegas....
or Phoenix....or Detroit....

I want to see Naples....

I have a ticket for Los Angeles....

My plane leaves for Manila....

I'm flying to Lahaina....

Expand the list.

HAVE AN AUCTION

Ads are a rich source of information. Have the students familiarize themselves with furniture ads, ads for art objects, and luxury items. Be sure they know prevailing prices. Then pretend an estate is on the auction block. Choose an auctioneer. Be sure he is alert, knows names and labels, and can describe objects vividly, graphically, and with attention to interesting details.

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For atmosphere, have a gavel, a lectern, lots of play money, and a receptive audience. Have dravings or real objects available. Remind the auctioneer to watch for gestures such as raised eye brows.

Later, decide whether the bids were too high or too low in terms of prices in the ads.

WHAT ABOUT HISTORY?

We hear so frequently that the things that happen today are really those events that are going to be written into the history books. So why wait until then? It will probably take years. The textbooks which are assigned by our schools may not be the latest, although they may be very good. But even a history text should be supplemented by current information.

The happenings in Vietnam, in Africa, in the race riots are important to us now because these shape the world we have to live in. Sometimes teaching the students to study the headlines, then just carefully going over the lead paragraph to find the who, what, where, why, and when is enough to pinpoint what is going on.

Frequently, there are real gems in the other sections of the newspaper. One tremendous article was entitled "Friends of Royalty," in the "About People" section of the July 5, 1968 Star-Bulletin, p. B-1. This was a fascinating account of the work done by Mr. and Mrs. John Dominis Holt. Mrs. Holt used a collection of old photographs of Hawaii royalty to build a collection of portraits of the monarchy.

The textbooks show Hawaiian royalty as dignified, regal, and philanthropic. But isn't it also nice to know that they "had been flesh and blood people with all the whims, the likes, the prejudices, the passions of people!"

Included in the article is this interesting note on Princess Ruth which is sure to interest all teen-agers: She loved clothes, was 6 feet 2, weighed 400 pounds, was "an oddball," and had a broken nose. In addition, she was tremendously rich, inherited all the lands of the Kamehameha family, and left the bulk of them to Bernice Pauahi Bishop, and today these lands comprise the bulk of those held by the Bishop Estate.

In like manner, what we read about Johnson, Rockefeller, Martin Luther King, the Kennedy family, are things our students are going to tell their own sons and daughters in years to come: "Oh yes, we read about them when we were in school. They weren't even in the books then!"

ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Most children have built castles, tunnels, a little mound in the sand. Some children in the Leeward area have poked around in some of the dry caves and found them defaced. The children on the Big Island have grown up seeing lava tubes. Most of them thrill to a good mystery story on TV, and delight over accounts of hidden treasure.

Anthropological and archaelogical findings reported in the papers make just as good and exciting reading. The Bishop Museum archaeologists recently conducted a nerve-wracking operation to a burial cave which is in the mouth of a lava tube that opens in the face of an 1,100 foot cliff on the Hamakua Coast. Here is history, archaeology, and drama all combined. Also a new kind of vocabulary.

Doesn't this sound challenging: "He said (Richard Kimball of Kauai Helicopters) if we didn't hurry, someone else was likely to get in....and end up a corpse." And to read that they had brought only 16,000 feet of rope and found that they needed 15,000 feet of it....this is adventure in capsule form. Pompeii was a long time ago; <u>this</u> happened last month.

There are other reports of findings, and rare collections from Asia and elsewhere. These should open up vistas for our students and help them visualize the immense role played by these specialists.

SCIENCE

In these days of programmed learning and computerized date-mate selection, students just have to keep abreast of the technological advances. I've found that sometimes this area may seem a little difficult for the educable students. So what we did was to go over the general ideas. New discoveries, inventions, and surgical techniques fascinated them. Sea life and ocean adventure proved appealing. I wonder how they'll react to a scientist trying to measure the amount of electricity in rain.

When a crosswise view or a lateral view of an object proves confusing, it might help to get a couple of apples, oranges, or starfruit. Cut one cross-wise, cut the other lengthwise. Tell them this is the same idea as the diagram of the new experimental car, submarine, jet, or space capsule.

MAKING MATH REAL

The newspaper is fertile ground for the mathematics teacher. It is perfect for teaching shapes. Try boxing-in short articles, locating circles, unusual shapes (see furniture ads).

To teach use of the ruler draw parallel lines between columns, measure the longest and shortest articles on the page. Use the comic strips to find angles, rectangles, and free form shapes. Study charts and tables as a quick, graphic, and easy way to find the record information without having to struggle through lots of verbiage.

To learn how to tell time on both a Roman and Arabic faced clock, use the TV and radio schedules. To whet their appetites near lunch recess, read recipes for fractions. Then study food advertisements for budgeting purposes.

Study the classified section for the other realities of life: work, job prospects, rent, second-hand appliances and cars. See which bank gives the best interest; which savings and loan company gives the best interest and incentives for saving money.

And just let me quickly add these activities: Try cutting out numbers from the many ads and using them for auditory and visual recall. Use these numbers or prices for arranging in order, from largest to smallest, or the reverse. For the very young, prepare a small basket and have them shop for grocery items at their own grocery store, using the current prices in the food ads.

For students who don't know how to make change, have a small collection of real pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, and half-dollars. Tell them to buy one or two items on special. Find total cost. Given a certain sum, have them figure out the exact change due. (When they found out how little loose change I had, some contributed their nickels and dimes. At the end of the session, everyone received his money. We didn't lose a penny. They seemed to welcome the chance to learn how to make change in this kind of a close relationship.)

It's a big fat lie that adults don't make mistakes. Of course, they do! Whoppers, even. Here is the perfect example to show the students the importance of correct decimal placement. An antique salesman sold a 200-year-old Chippendale chair for $11.95 instead of $1,195.00. This was a loss of $1,183.05 -- all because of an incorrectly placed decimal.

Other specifics: Alphabetizing -- see the classified ads, the classified directory.
Indexing -- see the table of contents and the classified section.
Classification -- sort ads into food, clothing, furniture categories.

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Differentiation: Sort out foods into meats, dairy products, produce; clothing into formal and informal or sports; furniture as modern and antique, or indoor and outdoor.

Planning for the future: Employment ads, educational programs in the classified section; investments in the business and finance sections.

Public awareness: See notices of public hearings, political agenda, legal notices (for the curious).

BUT WHAT ABOUT VALUES?

This is one of our vital concerns. Everyday there are concrete examples of the acceptable and unacceptable, the desirable and the undesirable qualities and traits in all the age and racial groups.

In an article called "Something Worth While" by Martin Gershe, taken from a Sunday Star-Bulletin & Advertiser, is an opening question: "Is there any hope for people approaching middle age, or does this world really belong to the screaming teeny boppers?"

The gist of the article is that John Owen, a British colonialist, recently placed full page ads in several magazines and newspapers across the country asking for an assistant to help him run the national parks of Tanzania, Africa, an area only a little more than twice as big as Connecticut. His first requirement was that the man be between the ages of 35 and 45 and have a longing to do something worthwhile with his life.

The candidate had to prove he was successful in some professional field of endeavor, had administrative ability, was sophisticated, friendly and mature. He also had to know how to fly a plane or have the ability to learn. In addition he had to have his own source of income because the salary was low and he had to take care of his own retirement problems and the schooling of his children. On top of all that, the candidate was warned that he would never be promoted, because once Owen leaves his job as director of national parks, the position will go to an African.

You wonder who would want a job that calls for a cut in salary, no promotion, a worse standard of living than he has, and no retirement benefit? At least 250 Americans, most of them well-qualified, applied for the job. The majority were married, with children.

Discussing this kind of article has great possibilities. In the process of delving into the who, what, why, how would people manage like that, the students will have to engage in some self-inquiry, and learn to express some of their own hopes, fears, ideals, or philosophies.

Youngsters, especially those of the intermediate and high school age, are so often concerned with the burning desire "to do their thing." There are numerous feature news articles showing young and older folks who are doing their "thing".

One example is the Kawailoa study-camp held for two groups of seventh and eighth graders from Aiea and Waialua. This involved some high school teachers and counselors from Aiea and Waialua High, and was federally funded. The campers were the school-haters, some of whom had never eaten grapefruit before in their lives, or had never had a whole steak of their own.

THEY LEARN FOR THEMSELVES

Many times, because these particular children cannot read as well as their peers, they get the impression that parents and teachers are always preaching honesty, trust and responsibility to them. When they themselves see the headline, or read a story about the good-will ambassadors existing all over the world, then they begin to think that these stories aren't all made up. After all, they do get a lot of "When I was your age...." remarks from home.

These articles they read are of real, live people people -- like the man who replaced a stolen bike for a for a faithful newspaper carrier, or how the community always rallies around when there is a disaster, or of how even one life is important enough to send out the rescue squad, the fire department and the search parties, and how, afterward, when the person is found, the cost to the state is listed. But, the important thing is that at the time of urgency, the human life is worth the time, care, and interest of many.

Newspapers do a marvelous teaching job without getting too "preachy". And they don't go on and on forever like broken records. The next example is usually a fresh one, and <u>real</u>.